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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the goals, model, programs and organization of the National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education, which was established in 1967 as the first national research and development program focused on early childhood education. The central goal is the development of specifications for the best learning environments of children from birth to nine years of age. The operational model of the Laboratory concerns itself with all functions, from research through training; it is built upon the programs or work to be accomplished and allows for continuous feedback. The basic program areas are: (1) research and synthesis on the effects of individual personal characteristics on learning performance, (2) research and synthesis of environmental influences on the educability of young children, (3) curriculum research and development for the design of educational intervention, (4) development and evaluation of educational change agent roles, and (5) development of evaluation techniques and supporting technology. A brief description is given of the 8 geographically dispersed component centers of the National Laboratory. The work of the centers is organized around programs of research and development coordination; intra- and extramural collaboration; communications; development of human and material resources; funding and fiscal management; and planning and management. (Author/NH)

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# The National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education

## Toward Constructive Change

James O. Miller, Ph.D.
Director

March 15, 1969

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Authorized under Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (PL 89-10) which amended the Cooperative Research Act of 1954 (PL 83-531), the National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education was established on February 1, 1967. It is the first organized national programmatic effort of research and development focused specifically on early childhood education. The work described herein is being performed pursuant to a contract with the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, OEC-3-7-070706-3118.

NATIONAL LABORATORY ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

## Introduction

Following World War II the social revolution, which had its roots in the depression years, gained new impetus with an exuberant economic growth throughout the country. This growth was in no small measure the result of rapid technological development during the war, which was now applied to peaceful production.

The highly developed abstracting and symbolic abilities necessary to compete in a technological society were lacking in a significant segment of the work force. Agricultural automation decreased opportunities for the unskilled and semiskilled in the labor market. Technological displacement increased and continues to increase at an alarming rate. An increasing gap developed between the affluent majority of the citizens in the country who were reaping the material benefits and those who were denied the fruits of the expanding economy. These economically deprived citizens found themselves to be deprived politically as well. A crisis in civil rights was inevitable. In the early 1950's, the American education system became the battleground for equal educational opportunity in the confrontation of power. As the battle for equal opportunity was being fought and skirmishes won, society faced yet another crisis, that of human rights. Equality of educational opportunity was a hollow victory indeed for the individual, if doors were closed to him because environmental

circumstances had failed to provide the necessary support to insure educational success.

Society's confrontation with conscience continues as it looks for means to insure that young children have adequate environmental support for building the skills, abilities and motivations necessary for success in school. Nowhere is the need greater than among those socially powerless who are experiencing economic impoverishment. Society has invested its educational system with the responsibility of meeting this social imperative. In particular, it is increasingly the charge to Early Childhood Education.

Simultaneous to the nation's social revolution has been the development of substantial evidence in the behavioral sciences over the past decade and a half as to the crucial importance of the early years in the development of personal competence. Long held beliefs in the relatively set pattern and pace of development have had to yield, in the face of increasing evidence that environmental circumstances play a major role in the shaping of both the developmental course and rate of the abilities required for environmental mastery. The accumulating evidence has had a dramatic effect upon developmental theory, which in turn has begun to affect practice. While earlier conceptions saw growth and development occurring according to a fixed genetic pattern and pace in a closed system, the evidence now seems to point to growth and development being an

interacting process between the individual's genetic endowment and his environmental circumstances in an open system. This new conception will have a profound effect upon childrearing and educational practices in the development of a competent and productive citizenry.

An enlightened Congress, responding to the social imperative for improving the educational system, enacted enabling legislation which created an opportunity to focus upon problems of national importance in education. Working with the U.S. Office of Education under authority of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, behavioral scientists and educators with a sense of social responsibility proposed the creation of a programmatic research and development effort focused upon early childhood education and development. The scope of the problem necessitated a national effort in this area. In February, 1967, the National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education became a reality with the funding of a National Coordination Center and six separately funded but federated research and development projects. The National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education, as it was conceived and as it is developing, brings to bear upon the problems of early childhood education and development the energy, ingenuity, and creativity of a large number of geographically distributed investigators from the behavioral sciences and creative practitioners from early childhood education.

Goals. The overriding goal of the National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education is to develop specifications for optimizing the learning environments of young children from birth to nine years of age. The strategies adopted to attain this goal are programmatic and collaborative, building on existing knowledge, producing new knowledge and reducing this to systems and procedures for application. Early agreement was reached among the investigators in the Laboratory that the existing knowledge base concerning individual characteristics of the young child related to his educational attainment, as well as knowledge of the environmental influences upon the child's development, was woefully inadequate. The increasing demands on the individual by a highly organized and technical society were so pervasive that better procedures and strategies for educational intervention and the development of the necessary supporting technology were imperative.

Accumulating research evidence has shown that early stimulation, and more broadly early childhood education, has a key role to play in the challenge of developing competency. Those in the National Laboratory share the belief that a planned programmatic approach will have a greater impact upon practice than an isolated and fragmented one.

The model. The operational model of the Laboratory is concerned with the full range of functions from research through training. However, it differs significantly from a hardware/product production model which

might be seen as running directly from research to development to production and sales. Conceptually it also differs from a straight line model for educational research and development. Such a model would take the form of production of knowledge through research, translation of that knowledge into development work once the data are in, moving then to the demonstration and field testing of innovative development work, dissemination of proven practice, and finally training people within the substantive paradigms developed. Such a linear model keeps effort, functions, costs, etc., neatly compartmentalized and manageable. But such a model shares little isomorphism with reality. It fails to provide guidelines for effective practice now, it fails to provide continuous feedback over the range of functional activities, thus it lacks regenerative power, self-correction, and generative ability. It is essentially a static model.

It is essential to the field of early childhood education that any research, development and training operation be able to provide guidelines for effective practice based upon the state of the art at the present time and have the capability to respond to the field on that basis continuously. In order to meet that demand, the research, development and training system must be regenerative in nature with self-correcting mechanisms built into it as well as the capability of generating new and innovative approaches to the problems of the field.

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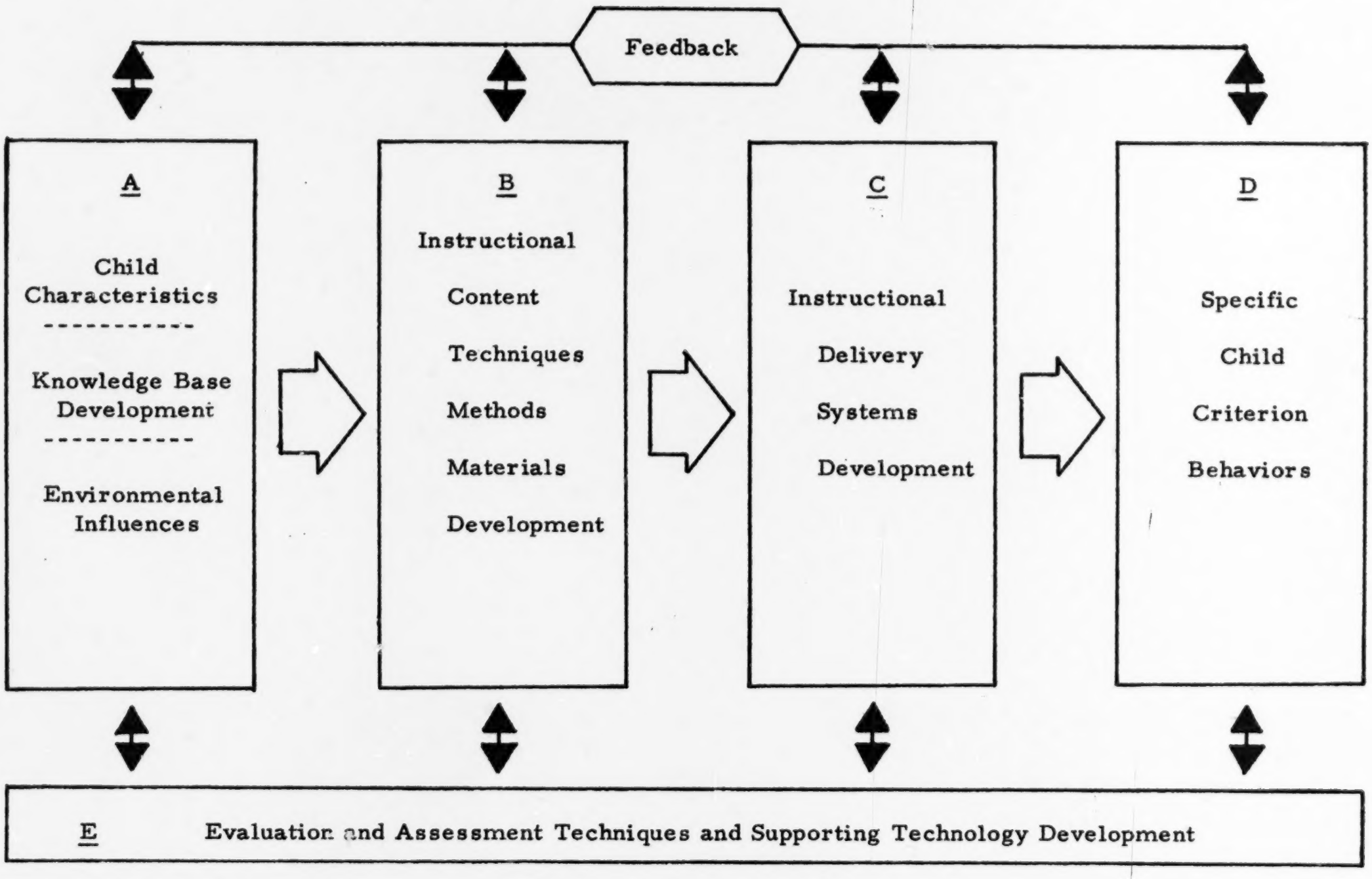
Feedback
A
Child Characteristics
Knowledge Base Development
Environmental Influences
B
Instructional Content Techniques Methods Materials Development
C
Instructional Delivery Systems Development
D
Specific Child Criterion Behaviors
E Evaluation and Assessment Techniques and Supporting Technology Development

Figure 1

The model of the National Lab is built upon the programs or work to be accomplished rather than the functions of a production model or the institutions of an organizational model. The educational research and development process is seen as including the following components.

The four major components in the diagram are represented by five basic program areas in the Laboratory. These are: (1) research and synthesis on the effects of individual personal characteristics on learning performance, (2) research and synthesis of environmental influences on the educability of young children [A--knowledge base development], (3) curriculum research and development for the design of educational intervention [B--development of instructional techniques and materials], (4) development and evaluation of educational change agent roles [C--development of instructional delivery systems], and (5) development of evaluation techniques and supporting technology [E].

All of the individual center programs, projects and activities are within one or more of these major laboratory programs. The emphasis at each center is unique, however. Each center's resources are distributed in keeping with its assessment of its potential for greatest contribution to the total Laboratory effort.

The Programs. The two major programs contributing directly to development of the knowledge base are central to the total effort. The first, individual characteristics, involves study of an individual or

personal variable's effect upon a performance outcome. As one might expect in educational research, cognitive variables have received the prime emphasis. However, other domains are receiving attention also. Development of orienting and attentional responses in infants, development of achievement motivation, and the relationship of moral judgment to cognitive development are but a few of the studies which are under way to identify the relationship between individual characteristics and learning performance.

The second major program contributing to the knowledge base is directed toward identifying the influence or effect of an environmental condition or agent upon a personal or individual variable related to educability. Such general environmental influences as ethnicity and cultural factors are being studied. Reinforcement variables and maternal interaction variables are more specific problems demanding attention. Research in this program has identified the relevance of maternal teaching styles to cognitive development. Factors such as temporal and spatial organization of the home have been shown to be crucial in early development among the disadvantaged. Obviously, this research feeds directly to curriculum development and classroom management.

The design, development and evaluation of educational intervention packages form the core of the curriculum work. Over the age range from birth to nine years of age, major effort in curriculum development

is concentrated at the nursery school and kindergarten ages with infancy and primary school age receiving a minor emphasis. Classroom applications account for 63 percent of the work in curriculum research and development, although material for parental use claims a healthy 24 percent.

The fourth major program, development of educational change agent roles, is of particular concern in early education. The development of new designs for delivering instruction must take into consideration new educational change agent roles. Several of the centers have pioneered in the use of classroom subprofessionals, home visitors, and liaison workers with parents, calling for the development of new training models as well as evaluating their effectiveness.

The fifth program represents the development of supporting technology and evaluation techniques. The major emphasis in this program is upon measurement and analysis. The problems of criterion measures, analysis models for longitudinal assessment of change and data management are critical areas of concern.

The individual component centers vary in the comprehensiveness of their programs with reference to any single program area of the Laboratory. For example, some centers have rather large scale curriculum research and development programs with the necessary supporting studies intended to provide basic information which would feed into

curriculum development. Others have chosen instead to focus primarily upon extending the knowledge base concerning individual characteristics of children or influences within the environment which may affect these characteristics.

When the primary focus of the research involves study of an individual or personal variable's influence or effect upon a performance outcome, the work is directed toward development of the knowledge base. Syracuse, Kansas and Chicago all have significant portions of their research and development efforts invested in the study of individual characteristics. Syracuse is particularly concerned with an analysis of cognitive behaviors. Projects illustrative of those included in this group are several focused on orienting behavior and discrimination learning on perceptual development and on the development of quantitative concepts.

At Kansas, researchers are attempting to assess language learning and language competency as a function of differences in cultural milieu and intellectual variables. At Chicago, one program is devoted to the study of early influences upon social and cognitive responsiveness and involves the use of twin children and their response patterns in early years as well as cross-cultural studies of responsiveness in newborns and children in their early school years.

Many of the centers have programs or projects which deal primarily with environmental influences. When the primary focus of the

research involves study of an environmental condition's or agent's relationship, influence or effect upon an individual or personal variable, the effort represents a contribution to expanding the knowledge base. At Peabody, several projects attempt to identify various environmental influences such as home and family factors which affect a number of individual characteristics such as concept development, cognitive style, and character development.

At Kansas, investigators have taken a slightly different tack and are attempting to assess the influence of socioeconomic class and ethnic group membership variables upon the vocabularies and speech patterns of preschool children. The Chicago component center also has projects under way which are focused upon the influence of ethnic group membership and socioeconomic class. They are attempting to relate these factors to child-rearing patterns and achievement motivation.

The category of environmental influences may, of course, be broken down into various subcategories. Home and family influences would constitute one subcategory and the Chicago group has one project investigating the effect of maternal influences upon cognition. A second subcategory of environmental influences which this group is exploring is one which occurs in school settings. In this particular project, the research focuses on the constraints and socialization patterns in a nursery school.

The Cornell center has recently initiated a project in the area of environmental influences. This study attempts to assess the influence of these variables upon emotional behavior and development during the first year of life.

At Arizona one project is concerned with a cross-cultural comparison of environmental influences and their variation or similarity from one culture to another. A second project at this center attempts to identify factors in the environments of children which control the acquisition and performance of academically related behaviors. It is also directed toward the assessment of the influence of environmental variables upon basic learning processes.

At the Syracuse component center, one program is devoted to the study of social and emotional development of preschool children. Projects in this program involve research concerning variables influencing imitation behavior, emotional arousal and social context, social learning roles, methods of introduction to nursery school and correlates of peer attachment status. Another project at this center is a study of parental influence on color preference of four-year-olds. Here again, the focus is upon the environment's influence upon an individual or personal variable.

Following the model in Figure 1, then, the information obtained in the individual differences and environmental influences programs feeds

directly into, and is affected by, the work to be pursued in curriculum research and development. Cornell, Kansas and Peabody have all chosen to devote rather significant portions of their effort to curriculum research and development. The following may serve as illustrative examples. At Cornell, one project is concerned with early learning in the kindergarten. The initial phases of the project are focused on early writing behaviors. In order to measure several aspects of writing behavior of interest in the research, the investigators found it necessary to first devise an analysis procedure for writing of preschool children. This bit of supporting technology then fed into the project, which continued until another point was reached where something further was needed. Here the feedback concept is exemplified.

Investigators at the Kansas Center are exploring the use of programming procedures in the development of preacademic intellectual skills for children 15 months to five years of age. This group hopes to develop programs which will develop the preacademic skills initially chosen on an a priori basis important for success in the first three primary grades. A secondary focus of this program will be the development of assessment procedures as well as evaluation techniques which may be used to judge the efficacy of the instructional program.

The Peabody researchers are involved in curriculum research and development in several areas. One program involves the

development of curriculum and materials from a major longitudinal educational intervention study with four and five-year-olds. In order to maximize the use of the curriculum research undertaken as part of a major intervention project, another project at Peabody is attempting to develop similar intervention procedures which may be used with mothers and their infants in the home. Still a third focus of this center's curriculum research and development activities is directed toward the development of techniques and materials which may be used to train trainers to provide an effective program of inservice education for paraprofessionals working in child development centers.

One choice for delivering instruction to young children may be through a person. Programs pursuing the development of new roles or new role emphases and evaluating their effectiveness are represented in several centers. In most cases a secondary objective includes the explication of training techniques and the development of supporting materials. For example, the Peabody Center has in progress a major intervention project whose purpose is to conduct a systematic assessment of the agents of change which enhance vertical diffusion of cognitive stimulation with a family and whose research focus is on comparison of several methods and procedures of intervening with families from disadvantaged environments.

As an expansion of this study, the Peabody group is investigating the effects of a home visitor program upon the academic aptitude of a group of first grade children. A comparison will be made of the effects of home visits designed to supplement the first grade curriculum with home visits which focus upon the development of gross motor coordination.

At Arizona, a program is under way to develop and evaluate new instructional and ancillary personnel roles. This program includes projects focused on the development of new classroom personnel roles, the development of program dissemination personnel, and the development of parents as instructional helpers.

At Cornell, one project is attempting to assess the influence of systematic story reading by teenagers and adults on language development of disadvantaged two-year-olds. The teenagers or adults go to the home and use story reading and other techniques to facilitate early language development.

This necessarily brief overview has tried to indicate the relationship of the component centers work to the program areas of the National Laboratory. Each of the centers has organized its particular work according to specific program objectives and goals. It is the intent that each center's work be programmatic in nature and have its own research and development logic consistent with the total Laboratory effort. Since the supporting projects and activities of the individual center programs

fill over 350 pages, it is impossible in an overview to present a detailed project synopsis for each center. However, in the next few pages a brief scope of work statement will be presented for each center.

Scope of Work of the Individual Centers. The National Coordination Center is organized around six major programs. (1) Research and Development Coordination. This program is designed to develop procedures which will provide for or generate a programmatic or focused research and development effort based upon an analysis and evaluation of the existing and present status of knowledge relating to early childhood education and development. This system will provide for the stimulation of research and development activities as well as the allocation of funds to accomplish the general objectives of the National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education. (2) Intra- and Extramural Collaboration. The collaboration program is charged with the responsibility of developing procedures and mechanisms for establishing effective collaborative arrangements within the National Laboratory and between the National Laboratory and other research and development efforts as well as independent investigators. (3) Communications Network. The objective of this program is to design, develop, and implement a communication network within the organizational structure of the National Laboratory and with agencies outside the National Laboratory. It serves both the functions of acquisition and dissemination of information. (4) Development of Human and Material

Resources. This program is concerned with establishing a human and material resource bank which has the capability of responding to requests for services as well as anticipating future needs in regard to development of resources for the Laboratory. (5) Funding and Fiscal Management. This program is concerned with developing and implementing a management system for the fiscal affairs of the Laboratory, including procurement, allocation, and accountability of funds. It also is concerned with generating a flexible, predictable and diversified funding program for the National Laboratory. (6) Planning and Management. In this program, developing more effective internal management and administrative procedures throughout the Laboratory is the prime objective. It is also concerned with long range planning for the total effort.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education. The Clearinghouse has four major programs, around which its efforts are organized. (1) Basic ERIC Clearinghouse. This program is designed to operate a basic ERIC Clearinghouse according to the specifications established by Central ERIC and the Office of Education, focusing on the early childhood education field. (2) Communication Network. This program is designed to assist in the development of a communication network for the National Laboratory with specific responsibilities for dissemination. (3) Information Analysis. This program is designed to develop a continuing system of information analysis of current states of the art in the

field. (4) Head Start Services. This program is responsible for providing reference services and stimulating the development of ma terials for Head Start use.

University of Arizona. Arizona Center for Early Childhood Education research and development effort is organized about five major substantive programs. (1) Description and Analysis of Classroom Intervention. This program is concerned with the continued evaluation of the cooperative program initiated with the Tucson Public Schools. An extensive description of the Mexican-American population of the relationship of home environmental variables of bilingual children and classroom performance and of the effects of the cooperative program form the major activities in this program. (2) Basic Learning Processes. The program is directed toward identifying those parameters of reinforcement which affect performance in the classroom, including amount of reinforcement and reinforcement contingencies that the teacher manages. (3) Classroom Research Methods. Analysis of teacher-student interaction and a survey of educational attitudes on the part of teachers and aides are two methods being used to isolate the cogent teacher variables which affect learning in this program. (4) Development of Training Techniques and Procedures. This program is directed toward the development of procedures and techniques for training trainers, aides, and parents to be more effective in developing learning environments and developing

individual skills to enhance the child's competency. (5) Development of Intervention Strategies. This program is concerned with intervention with infant and toddler aged youngsters, using the mother as the prime change agent and amplifying and extending classroom strategies to the third and fourth grades as an outgrowth of the cooperative study.

Chicago Early Education Research Center. The research and development effort is organized about seven substantive program areas. (1) Studies in Early Influences upon Social and Cognitive Responsiveness. Using twin study methods, cross-cultural comparisons and classroom observation in nursery through first grade, systematic study of children's response patterns as related to hereditary subcultural membership and group cohesive variables is being undertaken. (2) Studies on Children's Language and Cognitive Development. This program focuses upon the development of language sequences and the effect of social influences upon such development. The studies in this program will probe the relationships between language development and such variables as meaning systems, elaborated and restricted encoding processes, maternal influences on the cognitive environments, free speech and structured language performance, and syntactic development under varying intervention conditions. (3) Studies in Moral Judgment and Cognitive Stages. This program will complete the exploration of the relationship between Piagetian developmental tasks, evolution of moral

judgment and standard measures of mental ability. (4) Studies in Normal Classroom Behavior. In this program the effects of constraints, social demands and transitional periods between activities upon the child's accommodation to the classroom are the research focus. (5) Studies in Change and Intervention in School Systems. Facilitation of effective review, adaption and incorporation of innovation into the organization of the school, utilizing the social psychologist as a change agent, are the focus of this program. (6) Studies of Achievement Motivation. Cultural variations and their effects upon this motivational variable will provide data for generalization of previously observed relationships in this program. Work will be continued in Chicago ethnic subgroups and among Nigerian samples. (7) Methodological Studies of Longitudinal Research. This program focuses upon measurement problems in series or time sampling. The development of mathematical models appropriate for such analyses is expected.

Corenll Research Program in Early Childhood Education. The research and development work is organized according to three substantive program areas. (1) Curriculum Development and Early School Learning. This program is concerned with developing teacher administered diagnostic assessments of children's skills at the preschool level, studies of language teaching strategies, ecological study of classroom

behavior and analyses of artistic behavior in young children. (2) Analysis and Modification of Home Teaching Environment. Two intervention studies are the focus of this program. Extensive work with mothers in the home to modify their teaching strategies with their own children has been undertaken. A home visitor works with the mother and child in the home regularly. Through modeling, planned lessons and materials constructed especially for home use, the home visitor tries to improve the mother's teaching skills as well as the child's competency. The second study brings a teenager into the home to work with the young child in stimulating language development. By reading books and playing language games, the teen-tutor encourages language production. (3) Cognitive and Emotional Development in Infancy. This program is aimed at assessing the parameters of emotional development during the first year. The affective domain is seen as basic to the child's motivational system. Systematic analysis is expected to identify the role of experience in its development.

The Kansas Research Center for Early Childhood Education. The research and development work is identified in five substantive programs. (1) Individual Differences, Learning and Infant Development. The objectives of this program are to determine the effect of stable individual differences and the pacing of stimulation upon learning rate. Infants are the prime subjects in the program. (2) Use of Programming Procedures in

the Development of Preacademic Intellectual Skills. This program focuses on the age range 15 months to five years. Identification of preacademic skills, development of training programs and evaluation of program effectiveness are key activities in the program. (3) Studies of Language Learning and Language Competency. Comparison of different mnemonic procedures for enhancing retention, comparison of uni- and multisensory presentation of reading material to remedial subjects and the categorizing of spontaneous speech of advantaged and disadvantaged preschool children are projects within this program. (4) Acquisition and Performance of Regulatory Social Responses. The objective of this program is to identify the social influence behaviors a child should have for effective relations with significant adults and peers. (5) Ecological Reinforcers of the Preschool Environment. This program is designed to identify the means by which materials, activities and natural situations engage and maintain a child's behavior without intrinsic reinforcement in the preschool environment.

Peabody Demonstration and Research Center for Early Education. The research and development programs are four in number. (1) Intervention Studies. This program represents the major research and development undertaking of the center. Organized around the classroom and ho e intervention, other activities have been spin-off products, the home visitor and the trainer of paraprofessionals as change agents

and the early intervention with mothers of newborn infants. Curriculum materials and training manuals, as well as research reports, are anticipated during this contract year. (2) Ecological Program. Interactions between parent and child in the home, representing several socioeconomic classes, are being studied by ecological observation and analysis. Extensive recordings are expected to serve multiple research and didactic purposes. (3) Individual Characteristics. This program is concerned with individual variables such as impulsivity-reflectivity, resistance to temptation, modeling behavior, development of equivalence categories and adult role perception as they relate to environmental variables. The impact of the environment upon the child's intellectual and social development provides the central focus of the program. (4) Supportive Program. This program feeds into and is an outgrowth of the other efforts. Of particular concern is the development of teaching materials for home and classroom use and the development of more adequate assessment instruments in the cognitive domain which reflect the impact of educational intervention. Demonstration and dissemination of the educational innovations are included in the support program.

Syracuse Center for Research and Development in Early Childhood Education. The research and development work is organized about three substantive programs. (1) Analyses of Cognitive Behavior. This program represents a concerted effort to explore the parameters of

cognitive development. Such variables as language, perceptual and conceptual development, orienting behavior and hierarchial learning are being studied. Of particular interest is the relationship of cognitive variables to environmental influences affecting development. (2) Social-Emotional Development. Imitation behavior, parent-child separation, social context of arousal and peer attachments are being researched in this program. This program should contribute knowledge concerning the preschoolers' adjustment to the learning environment. (3) Longitudinal Evaluation Program. This program is directed toward the development of assessment techniques and the long term evaluation of specific concept areas and social emotional development. There is an active assessment of the influence of preschool experience on behavior. These programs are pursued in the Liverpool Laboratory Nursery School with which the Center has a cooperative relationship.

Organization of the National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education. Presently the National Laboratory consists of a nucleus of six university based research and development component centers, a National Coordination Center, and an Educational Resources Information Center, Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education. The Components of the National Laboratory and the directors are as follows:

National Coordination Center
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ERIC Clearinghouse
University of Illinois
Dr. Brian W. Carss, Director

Arizona Center for Early Childhood Education
University of Arizona
Dr. Marie H. Hughes, Director

Early Education Research Center
University of Chicago
Dr. William E. Henry, Director

Research Program in Early Childhood Education
Cornell University
Dr. Henry N. Ricciuti, Director

Research Center for Early Childhood Education
University of Kansas
Dr. Barbara C. Etzel, Director

Demonstration and Research Center for
Early Education
George Peabody College
Dr. Susan W. Gray, Director

Center for Research and Development in Early
Childhood Education
Syracuse University
Dr. William J. Meyer, Director

The research, development and training effort is centered on the campuses of colleges and universities where the traditions, the expertise, and the resources are available for mounting a focused programmatic effort. Geographical dispersion of the component centers provides an awareness of and sensitivity to problems in early education indigenous to the specific locale. Rural and urban settings are represented, as well as predominantly middle-class and disadvantaged populations within these

settings. The problems of specific ethnic subgroups in the culture can be identified, and programs can be designed with these in mind.

The concept of coordination of effort is to create an impact upon early childhood educational practice greater than what might be expected as a result of the summation of the individual component center's activities. Sharing of the work load, exchanging personnel, collaborative research effort, rapid inter-investigator communications, sharing of resources and rapid data exchange are a few of the potential and existing activities in the coordinated effort. The basic coordinating functions of planning, communications, resource development and program management are the responsibilities of the Coordination Center. The Coordination Center staff is guided and assisted in these efforts by the Steering Committee composed of the directors of each of the component centers and the Office of Education representative.

Review of the overall Laboratory program and recommendations on broad policy issues are made by an Advisory Board composed of educators, social scientists, university administrators, and business and cultural leaders. Active liaison between the Advisory Board and the Steering Committee is facilitated by regular attendance exchange at the meetings of the two bodies.

In this paper a brief overview of the goals, programs and organization of the National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education has been

presented. But the Laboratory is more than the sum of its goals and programs. It is more than a group of scientists and educators or an organizational structure. The Laboratory represents a focused effort to improve educational opportunity for all children. As such, it is an exploration into the domain of scientifically based constructive social change.

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